

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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P R 200949Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8453

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY MANILA

S E C R E T SEOUL 1091

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR KS

SUBJECT: PROPOSED CHANGES IN USAF STRUCTURE IN PACIFIC

REF: A STATE 029477 B MANILA 2053

1. GENERAL WILSON ALSO BRIEFED ME LAST WEEK ON THE PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF THE US AIR FORCES IN THE PACIFIC. HE PROVIDED SEVERAL ADDITIONAL DETAILS NOT COVERED IN REFTELS. THESE POINTS WERE:

A. THE ELIMINATION OF FIFTH AIR FORCE PER SE HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIDED, AND IT COULD REMAIN AS A SKELETAL HEADQUARTERS, LARGELY IN NAME ONLY.

B. WHETHER OR NOT THE FIFTH AIR FORCE IS ELIMINATED, ITS STAFF WILL BE CUT FROM ABOUT 280 TO 30, BUT THERE WOULD BE AN ENHANCEMENT OF THE MAC COMMAND AT YOKOTA, AND AN ADDITIONAL 70 PLUS PEOPLE ADDED TO THE 314TH AIR DIVISION IN KOREA.

C. THE 314TH WOULD, WITH ITS ADDITIONAL STAFF, TAKE OVER THE PLANNING FUNCTIONS NOW PERFORMED BY FIFTH AIR FORCE.

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2. THE COMMENTS IN REF B COVER MOST OF THE PROBLEMS AS I SEE THEM. WHILE THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE 314TH AIR DIVISION PLANNING CAPABILITIES IS AN ASSET IN KOREA, I AM PARTICULARLY CONCERNED BY TWO FACTORS. FIRST, THE ESSENTIAL INTERFACE BETWEEN JAPAN AND KOREA, NOW PERFORMED BY FIFTH AIR FORCE, WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THIS REORGANIZATION. SECONDLY, AS NOTED IN REF B, THE KOREANS MIGHT BE CONCERNED ABOUT COMMAND AND CONTROL OF AIR FORCE ASSETS BEING SHIFTED TO THE PHILIPPINES SINCE THERE ALREADY CONCERN ABOUT COMMAND AND CONTROL BEING EXERCISED FROM JAPAN.

3. I AM ALSO CONCERNED BY BOTH KOREAN AND JAPANESE REACTION TO THE ELIMINATION OR DISSOLUTION OF THE FIFTH AIR FORCE IN JAPAN. WE ALREADY HAVE A SEVERE CASE OF JITTERS IN KOREA REGARDING POSSIBILITY OF US MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM NORTHEAST ASIA INCLUDING KOREA, AND THIS ACTION WILL, I FEAR, TEND TO REINFORCE KOREAN DOUBTS ABOUT US STAYING POWER IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. WHILE THE KOREANS HAVE OCCASIONAL DAY DREAMS ABOUT SHIFTING US MILITARY ASSETS FROM JAPAN TO CHEJU-DO, THEY STILL VIEW BASES IN JAPAN AS ESSENTIAL TO SUPPORT FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS IN KOREA IN RESPONSE TO A NORTH KOREAN ATTACK. THIS REMAINS AN AREA OF CRITICAL SENSITIVITY TO THE KOREANS, AND DOWNGRADING OF US MILITARY ROLE IN JAPAN WOULD RAISE NEW DOUBTS ABOUT AVAILABILITY OF US SUPPORT FROM JAPANESE BASES.

4. FOR THESE REASONS, I WOULD SUPPORT AMBASSADOR SULLIVAN'S CASE FOR CONTINUATION OF TWO HEADQUARTERS RATHER THAN ONE, AND WOULD SUSPECT THAT MUCH OF THE MANPOWER SAVINGS CONTEMPLATED BY THE AIR FORCE WITH THIS REORGANIZATION COULD PROBABLY BE ACCOMPLISHED EVEN WITH RETENTION OF BOTH HEADQUARTERS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ORGANIZATION & MANAGEMENT, TROOP REDUCTIONS, AIR FORCE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SEOUL01091
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750060-0826
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750227/aaaaaybk.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 75 A STATE 029477, 75 B MANILA 2053
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <16 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROPOSED CHANGES IN USAF STRUCTURE IN PACIFIC
TAGS: MARR, MORG, KS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006